United Nations S/2000/269

Security Council

Distr.: General
30 March 2000

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission

(24 September 1999-30 March 2000)

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an account of developments and activities in respect of the mandate entrusted to the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), in accordance with Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991, 689 (1991) of 14 June 1991 and 806 (1993) of 5 February 1993. It covers the period from 24 September 1999 to 30 March 2000.

II. Developments in the demilitarized zone

2. The situation in the demilitarized zone remained generally calm throughout the period under review, and UNIKOM carried out its operations smoothly and without interruption.

3. There were 77 violations in the demilitarized zone: 1 maritime, 8 ground, 20 weapon and 48 air violations. Most of the ground violations occurred when Iraqi vehicles using the only hard-surface road along the border crossed in and out of Kuwaiti territory. On 19 October 1999, a UNIKOM patrol confronted a group of seven Kuwaiti civilians who had earlier been standing on the Iraqi side of the demilitarized zone. The group withdrew as soon as the patrol informed them that they had entered Iraqi territory.

4. Most of the weapons violations reported consisted of incidents of single gunshots fired during the night. Two illustrative instances follow:

(a) On 22 November 1999 Bangladeshi battalion guards posted at patrol and observation base N-3 reported that some unknown person or persons had fired two rounds of tracers within 2 to 3 metres of a Bangladeshi battalion soldier as he was climbing the tower there. After UNIKOM had deployed the quick reaction force, the senior Iraqi liaison officer informed UNIKOM that local farmers hunting wild animals had probably fired the shots. Later, however, UNIKOM was informed that a number of break-ins had occurred in the area around the time of the shooting. Therefore, it was possible that shots aimed at suspected burglars had strayed accidentally to the area of the patrol and observation base;

(b) On 8 January 2000, a UNIKOM patrol on the Iraqi side of the demilitarized zone observed an exchange of semi-automatic gunfire between two trucks. The trucks were carrying a total of nine men when a UNIKOM patrol observed them near patrol and observation base N-4. The occupants abandoned one of the vehicles and fled the area, leaving no evidence of injuries.

5. UNIKOM was able to identify only one of the aircraft involved in the numerous air violations. It involved an F-15 flying over southern sector headquarters on 18 October. All the other air violations involved aircraft flying too high to be identified.

6. The single maritime violation reported involved four Iraqi boats observed in Kuwaiti territorial waters in the Khawr 'Abd Allah waterway on 30 December.

00-36882 (E) 310300

7. Five complaints were received by UNIKOM during the reporting period, four from Kuwait and one from Iraq. The four from Kuwait were as follows:

(a) On 31 December, the senior Kuwaiti liaison officer complained that two Iraqi boats were anchored in Kuwaiti waters, south of patrol and observation base N-2. UNIKOM launched a patrol in the area, but was unable to substantiate the allegation;

(b) On 13 January the senior Kuwaiti liaison officer complained that the two border pillar signs were missing. A UNIKOM patrol verified this, but could not determine the circumstances of the disappearance;

(c) On 15 February the senior Kuwaiti liaison officer complained that five men in uniform had alighted from an Iraqi truck that had stopped close to the border, scaled the trench and climbed the berm. UNIKOM sent an investigative team to the location and found traces of tyre tracks and footprints, but could not determine what had occurred;

(d) On 1 March the senior Kuwaiti liaison officer complained that within the preceding 24 hours Iraqi personnel had crossed into Kuwait and tried to climb over the fence, which has not yet been electrified. Kuwaiti border police had found footprints in the sand pointing from the international border towards the fence and marks from attempts to scale the fence. Following an investigation, UNIKOM concluded that the alleged attempt to cross had taken place, but could not determine who was involved.

The senior Iraqi liaison officer lodged the fifth complaint, alleging that on 1 March a military aircraft was heard, but not seen, entering Iraqi airspace from Kuwait at a point near Umm Qasr.

8. UNIKOM visited a total of 51 ships calling at Umm Qasr harbour under the oil-for-food programme. Their cargo consisted mainly of wheat, rice, vegetable oil, baby food and various kinds of spare parts.

9. The electric fence that has been under construction in Kuwait for some time has now been completed. The Kuwaiti authorities have commenced implementation of a policy of relocating the Kuwaiti police posts in the demilitarized zone to locations adjacent to gates in the fence, causing much building activity. A general expansion in oil installations on the Kuwaiti side of the demilitarized zone has taken place, and activities are currently at an all-time high. Oil production on the Iraqi side has also been expanding.

10. On 13 January UNIKOM closed down patrol and observation base N-10 and transferred the bulk of its assets and resources to the newly inaugurated maritime operations. UNIKOM took this action following a decision by Kuwait to close the berm/trench in the southern part of the demilitarized zone. The Kuwaiti action was intended to improve security in the 'Abd Ali area and to facilitate development of civilian activities in the easternmost part of the demilitarized zone.

11. Following a lengthy period of preparation, the Khwar 'Abd Allah Waterway Monitoring Project commenced operation on 15 February. This new maritime operation is directly under the command of the Force Commander. Its area of responsibility covers the waterways (mainly the Khawr 'Abd Allah) and the land area patrolled by UNIKOM from patrol and observation base N-2 on the Al Faw peninsula. A total of 8 Bangladeshi naval personnel and 18 military observers have been assigned to the maritime operation. It has operational and logistical responsibility for three patrol and observation bases, including a new one on Warbah Island (M-1), the presently existing N-1, which has been renamed M-2, and the patrol and observation base on the Al Faw peninsula (N-2), which will be permanently staffed by military observers as soon as a pier is built nearby and will be renamed patrol and observation base M-3.

12. The humanitarian activities of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have continued and include mail exchanges across the border. On 22 March ICRC organized and UNIKOM supervised the repatriation to her parents of an Iraqi girl who had been living with relatives in Kuwait. A scheduled ICRC meeting at Camp Khor, pursuant to paragraph 13 of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999) of 17 December 1999 concerning the repatriation of Kuwaiti and third-country nationals following the Gulf crisis, was cancelled at the request of ICRC.

13. UNIKOM continued to maintain close and regular liaison with the authorities of both Iraq and Kuwait at various levels, including visits by the Force Commander to government officials in Baghdad and Kuwait City and through UNIKOM liaison offices in the two capitals. Both the Kuwaiti and Iraqi Governments have cooperated with UNIKOM in the conduct of its operations.

III. Organizational matters

14. As at 23 March, the overall strength of UNIKOM was 1,304, as follows:

(a) 197 military observers from Argentina (4), Austria (7), Bangladesh (5), Canada (6), China (11), Denmark (6), Fiji (7), Finland (5), France (11), Ghana (5), Greece (6), Hungary (5), India (7), Indonesia (4), Ireland (5), Italy (5), Kenya (4), Malaysia (5), Nigeria (5), Pakistan (7), Poland (5), Romania (3), Russian Federation (11), Senegal (5), Singapore (5), Sweden (5), Thailand (6), Turkey (6), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (11), United States of America (11), Uruguay (7) and Venezuela (2);

(b) An infantry battalion of 775 from Bangladesh;

(c) An engineering unit of 50 from Argentina;

(d) A logistics unit of 34 from Argentina;

(e) A helicopter unit of 35 from Bangladesh;

(f) A medical unit of 14 from Germany;

(g) 199 civilian staff, of whom 51 were recruited internationally and the remainder were recruited locally.

On 1 December Major General John A. Vize (Ireland) succeeded Major General Esa Tarvainen (Finland) as Force Commander.

IV. Financial aspects

15. As indicated in my previous report (S/1999/1006 and Corr.1), the General Assembly, in its resolution 53/229 of 8 June 1999, appropriated the amount of $53,991,024 gross for the maintenance of UNIKOM for the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000, subject to the review by the Security Council with regard to the question of termination or continuation of the Mission. Two thirds of the cost of the Mission, equivalent to $34.7 million, is to be funded through voluntary contributions from the Government of Kuwait. Assessments on Member States have been made for the period ending 30 April 2000. The Government of Kuwait has paid voluntary contributions totalling $23.4 million for the period ending 30 April 2000.

16. As at 24 March, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIKOM for the period from inception to 30 April 2000 amounted to $10.9 million. The unpaid assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations amounted to $1.9 billion.

V. Observations

17. During the period under review, the situation along the border between Iraq and Kuwait remained generally quiet. UNIKOM continued to carry out its tasks smoothly, thereby contributing to the maintenance of calm and stability along the border. In those tasks it continued to receive the cooperation of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities. I recommend that the Mission be maintained.

18. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to the former Force Commander, Major General Tarvainen, to Major General Vize, his successor, and to the men and women under their command for the manner in which they have discharged their responsibilities. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves, on their countries and on the United Nations.